issues for advancement of IT and the major recommendations made by them included the following:

* India should endeavor to be the first preference for outsourcing software development by the companies abroad.
* To attract best and finest talent to the IT sector, policy initiatives are to be introduced to attracts private investment in the area of education and setting up of private Universities should be expedited.
* Attract foreign nationals to India for higher and contemporary studies and to use bilateral trade channels to enter into Mutual Recognition Agreements with countries which do not recognize Indian Universities.
* To review various policies and procedures keeping in mind operational requirements.
* Government of India to focus on the adoption of Information Technology throughout the country in all areas and applications with a view to provide maximum convenience to the public.
* To focus on development of PCs in local languages.
* To attract industry participation in the stake of Rs. 5000 crores for Media Lab Asia.
* To initiate steps for major development of the hardware sector to make it globally competitive.

Investment by France Telecom

5271. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether France Telecom is keen on increasing investment in India especially in the cellurar telephone sector;

(b) if so, whether according to the spokesman of France Telecom, there is huge scope for growth in cellular telephone in India;

(c) if so, whether any agreement with France Telecom investment in telecom India has been signed;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) to what extent, the France Telecom has agreed to invest in this sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) There is no proposal pending at present for the investment by France Telecom in Indian cellular telephone sector.

(b) to (e) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Setting up of common international gateway in India

5272. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has mooted a proposal to set up a common international gateway in India that could connect all the Asian countries to the global internet;

(b) if so, whether the financial assistance for the project has been sought from the Development Gateway Fund of the World Bank;

(c) whether the proposal is a corollary to the recommendation made by the United Nation's ICT Task Force for bridging the digital divide; and

(d) if so, by when, a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) World Bank has set up Development Gateway Foundation with objective to focus on bridging the digital divide and promote sustainable development and poverty reduction.

India has become one of the founder members of the Foundation. A Research and Training Centre of the Foundation has been proposed to be set up in India in order to achieve the above objective.

The proposed Research and Training Centre of the Development Gateway Foundation is expected to become operational by the end of financial year 2002-03.